InSurv: "We Provi

Fathom *recently sat down with RAdm. Curtis A. Kemp, president of the Board of Inspection and Survey, to discuss the importance of material readiness not only in terms of combat capability, but also in terms of reducing the potential for hazards and mishap prevention.—Ed.*

Were there any particular areas you had in your sights when you became president of the Board of Inspection and Survey?

First, let me emphasize that InSurv is part of the Navy's readiness process. We provide a service to the CNO and fleet commanders. We do that by materiel inspections: We go out and inspect ships; we see how well their systems are working—do they work to design specifications? Do the environmental protection systems also work on the ships? A lot of people don't realize that we also have responsibility to the CNO to make sure all the environmental protection standards and Navy occupational standards are observed by the Navy.

In the short time I've been here and as I've looked back on the data from the last couple of years, I would say that the one area that stands out as a priority concern for us is damage control material readiness. From the trends, we have not seen much improvement in the last two years, and so far—in the data that we have this year—we haven't seen much improvement, either.

Some of the prime areas of concern are in our AFFF systems; they are not consistently working properly. Watertight closures have remained problematic probably as long as any of us have been in the Navy. Also, we're seeing problems with our main drainage systems and our chemical and biological sensing systems. Those are some areas I would say are priority concerns right now. We are trying to dig down in the data and bring out the causal factors as best we can. We'll be providing this information with recommendations back to the fleet and type commanders so they can take action to try to improve these areas. Obviously, with these systems—as with all systems aboard ship—we share the vision that we want these systems to work 365 days a year. As the terrorist attack against USS *Cole* so rudely showed us, we need to make sure that, whether we're facing enemy action or accidental fire or flooding, our systems must be ready to fight, because they're not going to get a second chance.

Although the Navy this year has had superb retention and manning figures, could recent past personnel shortages and extended operating periods with minimal maintenance periods have contributed to readiness shortfalls?

It's important to remember the InSurv board is just a piece of the readiness process. We do the material side of things. When you're talking overall

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readiness, you're talking training, manning, and all the operational aspects. Those areas really are the prime concern of the CNO and the fleet commanders. Of course, if you're talking about funding, that's completely in the CNO's and fleet commanders' areas. While the InSurv board can address the material side of readiness, it's difficult for us to evaluate things from an overall readiness perspective because that really comes down to the fleet commanders.

There are currently some reduced manning experiments in the Navy, such as that taking place aboard USS *Milius.* Will possible future reduced manning—combined with technology—perhaps change InSurv's philosophy and the way it does business?

As we look ahead to reduced manning on future ships and ask will it affect how InSurv does business: The short answer is, for the most part, no. It's not going to affect the way we conduct our inspections. The reason is, we are inspecting to technical standards and we believe it is extremely important that we stay consistent on how we conduct our inspections. We need to adhere to the same standards so that we provide consistent and relevant feedback to the CNO. If we changed our standards, we wouldn't get an accurate reflection of the real impact of changing maintenance procedures, or any trends we see in material conditions because of changes in manning. We think it's very important that we (InSurv) remain consistent in the way we conduct material inspections.

One thing that has changed is that we used to inspect ships at a periodicity of not greater than three years. A couple of years ago, the CNO —under advisement from fleet commanders— changed that periodicity to five years, based upon discussions indicating that an InSurv inspection every five years was sufficient. We have adjusted accordingly.

As far as the manner in which we do the inspection: That has stayed the same. The standards are still based on technical documentation. Sometimes we're asked the question, "Do we come up with our own standards for things?" The answer to that is, "Absolutely not!" We have to base everything we do on a reference, whether it's a NavShips tech manual—an NSTM—or whether it's on an MRC or according to EOSS. Nonetheless, it must be according to some written specification because that's where we draw all our standards.

What's been the impact of technology on the InSurv board? The greatest impact has been on how we record data and how we provide feedback. You will still see inspectors running around with wheel-books and steno-pads, although—I will tell you—you'll see a fair number of the inspectors with Palm Pilots—that's the way they record their data these days. And I guarantee almost every single inspector will have a laptop with him and at the end of each day, he'll be on his laptop assimilating the day's data. By the time that inspection is done that week, inspectors can provide immediate feedback; they'll have the whole electronic listing of findings that they'll be able to provide to the ship and to the ISIC.

The other area of technical advancement affecting us relates to various equipments' self-monitoring capabilities and other non-intrusive, assessment capabilities. For instance, there's noise-monitoring gear that our technical communities use on various equipments. That capability has greatly reduced a lot of InSurv open-and-inspect requirements. It used to be, on the fourth day of inspection—after the underway period—a ship would return to port and we'd have this whole day of open-and-inspect requirements where bearings, air compressors—you name it—were torn apart to see what the insides looked like. That has been significantly reduced. We do very little open-and-inspect any more, which is a welcome change to the ships on the waterfront.

What is the relationship with InSurv and the Afloat Training Group (ATG), which has replaced the Fleet Training Group?

We do work with ATG, and we are working more and more with them and with the Fleet Technical Support Centers, to develop inspection lists that are as standardized as possible. As a matter of fact, we just held a standardization conference in September. InSurv hosted it and we had representatives from ATG, FTSC, along with other fleet representatives. The conference goal was to divide people into their various functional areas and work on standardized checklist criteria. As we develop more and more of these common checksheets, from the Sailor's perspective, whether ATG comes aboard to do training or FTSC comes aboard to do a technical assist, the checks should look similar to the requirements when we come aboard for a final material inspection.

InSurv inspections are often viewed with a bit of dread and fear, and InSurv inspectors are sometimes thought of as the guys wearing the "black hats" whose goal is to find as many things wrong as possible. How do inspectors counter that misconception and has there been any change within the past five years in how InSurv deals with the fleet to counter this image?

I can't tell you how things were five years ago because I wasn't here. I will tell you that one of the areas we are working very hard is to try to become a more user-friendly organization. It's very important to us that the relationships that our inspectors maintain with Sailors in the fleet is professional and positive. We want it to be clear that when we go and deal with these young folks on the deckplates, we're there to inspect systems, to see to what degree these systems are working in relation to design criteria; what the limitations are and what problems exist. We are not there to find fault with any individuals.

We're also working to be a ready source of information that helps ships improve their material readiness. We have an extensive database of dis-

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Navy photo by PH2 Jimmy Lee

crepancies and trends. These are available on our website. We conduct extensive pre-briefs aboard a ship at least two months before we conduct an inspection. Our people are always available by phone, and when I say that, I'm serious. I'm sure the average shipboard Sailor or officer is somewhat reluctant to call the InSurv board, but we have people available, and that's why they're here. We have an incredible amount of expertise and when somebody calls this board with a question, they're going to get an answer. Even after an inspection, if there's any way we can help with additional feedback, if there are any other issues on how we conduct parts of an inspection, or if commanding officers, XOs, department heads, or chief petty officers want to go out on inspections with us on another ship so they can pick up some lessons learned before the evolution comes around for their ship—we are happy to oblige. We want to be a source of useful information.

As far as being seen as the guys with "black hats"—that certainly is not our intent. As I said, we have a job to do. If you asked me, "What is the goal of InSurv?" I would say that our goal is to independently verify a ship's material combat readiness to take our Sailors into harm's way. We're the CNO's agent to do that. We hope the findings we provide to the CNO and to fleet commanders will help them as they review their maintenance policies, as they prepare for major work availabilities, or as they prepare their ships to deploy. The information we provide can help our ships improve in all those areas. I think it's important to remember our inspectors are all Sailors; they came from the fleet and most of them have more than twenty years of experience. A majority of our people are LDOs, but we also have line officers, Engineering Duty officers, Supply Corps officers, Medical Service Corps officers, and aviators. We have a tremendous amount of experience here and, as I said, they're all Sailors. They came from the fleet, and for most of them, when they finish their tour at InSurv, they'll return to the fleet. So, they care about ships. There are some people who may always see us as the "bad guys." But, I would hope that, if we are seen as the bad guys, at least we will be seen as the bad guys who care and are fair.

InSurv is a major inspection and it's one of the few inspections—at least in the non-nuclear surface forces—that is conducted by an independent organization. We have a lot of assessments and a lot of assists these days, but InSurv is the CNO's arm to formally look at material readiness. At the same time, we think it's important that we work closely with the fleet and type commanders. As I said, we are part of the readiness leadership team. I have had the opportunity to call on just about all the fleet and type commanders because I want them to know that we want to maintain an open flow of information. If they have issues and concerns with us, we want to know those also so that we can address them. In other words, we want to maintain what some people have termed a "healthy tension" among us. We all have this common goal: We want to see our ships improved in their material condition and we hope we play an important part providing data to fleet commanders that will help attain that goal.

Does InSurv also inspect submarines?

Some people don't realize it, but we do inspect submarines. The nuclear side of inspections is separate and is done by Naval Reactors. However, for the rest of the systems, we have a group of

submarine officers in our command who go out and inspect every submarine in the fleet.

The Planned Maintenance System (PMS) has long been the bane of Sailors because it involves so much minutiae. What has been done to streamline PMS without diluting its effectiveness?

As a result of the Fleet Review Board a couple years ago, it was determined that some PMS checks were too extensive, so there was a reduction in the amount of PMS required aboard our ships. That's something obviously managed by the fleet and type commanders. We recently met with [*Commander, Fleet Forces Command*] Adm. Natter, and the type commanders to discuss maintenance, material conditions, InSurv inspections, and how we can improve in these areas. Type commanders are taking numerous actions to improve material conditions. Additionally, PMS assessments have been rejuvenated by type commanders within the past year. I can't help but think that's going to improve material conditions. Some feedback we receive from our inspectors indicates some materiel problems exist because PMS appears to not have been done as it should have been done. That kind of goes back to my comment about being concerned with systems 365 days a year; we need to be concerned with PMS 365 days a year. We owe it to our Sailors to try to make this (PMS) system as effective and efficient as possible so that it's not frustrating to Sailors, but rather, it's easy to understand and to administer. I believe the fleet is doing that. At the same time, within the lifelines, our COs need to make PMS a routine part of life, and that view needs to go all the way down to the work center supervisors. It's going to keep our ships and our systems in better fighting condition. PMS is critical and will remain so.

Do you have any closing thoughts to pass to *Fathom* readers?

InSurv is going to continue to try to provide the best product back to the fleet and to independently provide an objective check on the material conditions of our ships. Sometimes, I think we get to the point that we don't really feel that all our equipment should work to design specifications. Some may think that as my ship gets older and can't make full power anymore—maybe that's OK. Or, if we need to go from all-stop to a flank bell and the engines respond a little bit slower than designed, we can live with that.

We shouldn't be satisfied with that kind of performance. These systems are made to be robust, to be resilient, and if they're not working up to specifications, then the workcenter supervisor, the chief petty officer, and the commanding officer shouldn't be satisfied. We have the capability with

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Navy photo by IS1 Matthew C. Ruble

the maintenance facilities we have in our Navy to bring these things back into specifications. So, we need to work hard at this. If an MRC indicates that some equipment should operate at this psi, or within this rpm or these torque limitations, then that's not only what we should expect, but we should demand the system meets those specifications. When our folks inspect ships, that's exactly what they're going to look for, and if something is a little bit out of parameters, it's not satisfactory.

So, it's not that we're making some arbitrary call; we're going to use the MRC and we're going to use the technical documentation. But we all need to have this vision of wanting our equipment to work to design specifications. Our belief is that if a ship is ready for an InSurv inspection, that ship is materially ready for combat.